Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/kingdomparablest0000unse_j1h5

KINGDOM PARABLES AND THEIR TEACHING

WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE PRAYERS OF JESUS

Cloth, 2s. net.

RELIGION AND HEALTH

Paper, 1s.

SALVATION AND THE OLD THEOLOGY

Cloth, 2s. 6d. net.

KINGDOM PARABLES
AND
THEIR TEACHING

BY

LEN G. BROUGHTON, D.D.

AUTHOR OF "THE PRAYERS OF JESUS," "SALVATION AND THE OLD THEOLOGY—A STUDY IN ROMANS," "RELIGION AND HEALTH, WITH SUGGESTIONS TO THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH," ETC., ETC.

HODDER AND STOUGHTON
LONDON MCMX

Printed by Hazell, Watson & Viney, Ld., London and Aylesbury.

CONTENTS

PAGE

THE PARABLES OF MATTHEW XIII . vii

I

THE PURPOSE TO SERVE 3

II

THE PARABLES AND THE KINGDOM—A DEFINITION 11

III

THE SOWER 21

IV

THE TARES 39

V

THE MUSTARD SEED 63

VI

PAGE

THE LEAVEN 87

VII

THE HIDDEN TREASURE . . 115

VIII

THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE . . 147

IX

THE DRAGNET 169

X

THE HOUSEHOLDER 195

THE
PARABLES OF MATTHEW XIII

"Behold, the sower went forth to sow; and as he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the birds came and devoured them: and others fell upon the rocky places, where they had not much earth: and straightway they sprang up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And others fell upon the thorns; and the thorns grew up, and choked them: and others fell upon the good ground, and yielded fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

"*Another parable set He before them, saying, The Kingdom of Heaven is likened unto a man that sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went away. But when the blade sprang up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. And the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? whence then hath it tares? And he said unto them, An enemy hath done this. And the servants say unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he saith, Nay; lest haply while ye gather up the tares, ye root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of the harvest I will*

say to the reapers, Gather up first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn."

"*Another parable set He before them, saying, The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is less than all seeds; but when it is grown, it is greater than the herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the heaven come and lodge in the branches thereof.*"

"*Another parable spake He unto them; The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened.*"

"*The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto*

a treasure hidden in the field; which a man found, and hid; and in his joy he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field."

"*Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man that is a merchant seeking goodly pearls: and having found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it.*"

"*Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was filled, they drew up on the beach; and they sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but the bad they cast away. So shall it be in the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the righteous, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire:*

there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth."

"*Have ye understood all these things? They say unto Him, Yea. And He said unto them, Therefore every scribe who hath been made a disciple to the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.*"

I

THE PURPOSE TO SERVE

I

THE PURPOSE TO SERVE

THE purpose of this little book is to present a view of the teaching of the seven parables of our Lord contained in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew's gospel concerning "the Kingdom of Heaven." This view of their teaching may not accord with the views of teachers most generally trusted for interpretation, and for this reason I have felt a certain diffidence in the matter.

For a number of years I have been a pre-millennialist. I believe firmly that

the Scriptures teach that Jesus is coming back to the earth to set up His world-wide reign, which we call the millennium. I cannot find one thing in the Scriptures that supports the teaching that the Church in this dispensation is to convert the world, which is the position of the post-millennialists. I do not say that other men equally as honest and sincere as I am do not see it differently.

In studying these parables of the Kingdom I have been led to believe that our Lord is here endeavouring to set forth the method of the formation of His Kingdom, which is to be a Kingdom on this earth, and when He comes from Heaven the second time He will be the literal, reigning King.

Some of these parables are interpreted by pre-millennialists in a way that appears to me contrary to the Scripture scheme and to reason. I can never believe, for example, that the parable of the Leaven means to teach the progress of sin. Nor, on the other hand, can I accept the post-millennial teaching that the leaven is the gospel, and is intended to show that the gospel in this dispensation is to convert the world.

There is no fixed rule for interpreting the parables. If it be said that the leaven here represents sin because it does so in every other instance in the Bible, we get ourselves into a difficult situation. The same reasoning makes the uplifted serpent in the wilderness represent the devil, for the serpent

typifies evil in every other instance in the Bible. It is destructive to the truth to carry typology too far. Jesus was free and independent in the use of figures of speech. He used whatever came to hand that would best illustrate the truth. If He were on earth to-day He would probably use different illustrations, just such as came to hand at the time.

The Jews were perfectly familiar with the idea of a monarchy. They had been subjects of a Kingdom, and hence they thought they knew what it meant. But Jesus was working out the principles of a new Kingdom, that they knew nothing about—"The Kingdom of Heaven." And these simple parables are used to show how this Kingdom is to

be formed and administered. They are given to His disciples. The world would not take them in, because they are contrary to the world spirit.

The world spirit proceeds by force to subjugate men. Jesus, in establishing His Kingdom, proceeded upon the very opposite principle, and this He did not want the world at once to understand. His disciples had to be taught first; hence we read: "And the disciples came, and said unto Him, Why speakest Thou unto them in parables? And He answered and said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but whosoever hath not,

from him shall be taken away even that which he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables; because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And unto them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall in no wise understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall in no wise perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest haply they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should turn again, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear."

II

THE PARABLES AND THE KINGDOM—A DEFINITION

II

THE PARABLES AND THE KINGDOM—A DEFINITION

WHAT is a parable? It is certainly not something that is used to becloud the mind, to darken the intellect, to shroud or hide the truth, though a great many people seem to have that idea. We are often told, "Be very careful about attempting to explain a parable; one is liable to give a misinterpretation of a parable." I grant you that we should be very careful about expounding any truth, but a parable is not given to make the truth harder to get at; a parable is given to

make the truth easier to understand. A parable is simply a story told for the purpose of illustrating a truth; of illuminating it and making its meaning clear. Our Lord in using parables selected current things for the most part—things occurring about Him. He seized upon them and used them to set forth the truth that He was endeavouring to teach, which could not itself be easily understood. The relation of a parable to the truth it explains is very much like using a smoked glass to see the sun. When the sun is going into an eclipse we want to see it, but we cannot look on the sun with the naked eye. No man has ever yet had an eye sufficiently strong to be able to look at the sun for any length of time. The

light is too dazzling. So, in order that we may observe a partial eclipse we have to use a smoked glass, which soften's the sun's rays and blends the colouring so that the natural eye, through this blending of colours and softening of light, is enabled to perceive that which is desired.

It is so with a parable. The truth is often so simple that the mind fails to grasp it. It is too dazzling for the natural mind unaided to get hold of it and take it in, and so our Lord gives a parable which blends the colours of the truth, softens the intensity of its rays, and we are enabled to behold that which is there. So when we come to the consideration of a parable, let us under-

stand that it is our Lord's way, not of making the truth harder to understand, but of making it easier to comprehend.

All through the New Testament this phrase is used, "The Kingdom of Heaven," or "The Kingdom of God," or "The Kingdom of Righteousness." What do we understand by it? Let me say in the outset that we are to understand that the Lord is not referring to the church. The church is nowhere presented as the Kingdom of Heaven, or as the Kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of Righteousness. The church is not the Kingdom in any sense. The church is within the Kingdom; the Kingdom is far bigger than the church. The Kingdom is this world with Jesus as the

reigning King. Nowhere does Jesus speak of the church as the Kingdom, and nowhere does the Holy Spirit speak of the church as the Kingdom. The church is spoken of as the "body of Christ," the "Bride of Christ," the "Habitation of God"; but nowhere in the Scriptures is the church spoken of as the Kingdom. The Kingdom, I say, is this world with Jesus as its King. It is now in the process of formation; it is now gathering up its subjects; it is now getting ready for its permanent organization under the reign and rule of the personal King, who is Jesus Christ, the Lord. The Kingdom is a perfect social order with a perfect social orderer as its living, reigning head. We talk to-day a great deal about sociology.

It is a great and important subject, one in which the church is profoundly interested, one with which humanity is profoundly concerned, one with which the state and the nation are profoundly concerned. But there will never be any such thing as a perfect social order until we have a perfect social orderer. We shall never get a perfect government with an imperfect governor. A government with an imperfect body of men at the head to legislate and enforce what is legislated will never be a perfect government.

The Arrangement of Parables

Another thing that we want to see is the arrangement of the parables. They can be arranged in two parts, the first

four in one group and the remaining three in another group; and they may be studied in these groups. The first four were spoken to the multitudes while Jesus sat in the boat and the multitude stood upon the shore. The remaining ones were spoken after they had retired into more private quarters, when the disciples themselves had audience alone with the Lord.

Another and better way of grouping them is in groups of two. For example, "The Sower" and "The Tares," "The Mustard Seed" and "Leaven," "The Treasure Hidden in the Field" and "The Pearl of Great Price," leaving the parable of the Dragnet to itself at the end, for a reason I will show you when we come to consider it.

So much for the preliminary work that we have concerning these parables. We come now to consider the first of them.

III

THE SOWER

Behold, the sower went forth to sow; and as he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the birds came and devoured them: and others fell upon the rocky places, where they had not much earth: and straightway they sprang up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And others fell upon the thorns; and the thorns grew up, and choked them: and others fell upon the good ground, and yielded fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.—MATT. xiii. 4-8.

III

THE SOWER

THERE are four points in the parable to be noted. First, the sower; second, the seed; third, the soil; fourth, the harvest.

Who is this sower in the parable? "The sower went out to sow." Please observe the definite article here. Not "A sower," but "THE sower." The Divine Personality is referred to in this statement. In my judgment the sower is none other than the Holy Ghost. Most commentators declare that the sower is Jesus Christ, but I do not

believe it. He is the third person of the Godhead, whose mission it is to "take of the things of Christ and reveal them unto the world."

But let us see another word here—a small word, but very significant. "The sower went OUT to sow." The figure used here is the figure of the oriental farmer. In that country even now farmers do not live out in the country sections as our farmers do. They live in small towns and villages and hamlets or even in the larger cities, and they go out to their farms for their work and come back to the town or city where they live at night. They do this for protection. And so the sower went OUT to sow—OUT of the city to his farm. There are two theories about

it. I will state them both, and let you conclude for yourselves as to what it means here. First, there is the theory that it has reference to the coming of the Holy Ghost, that when He came, He established the church and began through it and by it sowing the seed of the Kingdom.

Another theory, and I personally give this theory more credence, is this: That this going out refers to the leaving of the Jews by the Holy Ghost because of their rejection of Jesus. The Holy Ghost went out from the Jewish people to the far Gentile nations of the world, that through them He might propagate the Kingdom; that He might sow the seed that would afterwards ripen into the Kingdom of Heaven. Without

question, the Jews were primarily selected to form the Kingdom. It was in the purpose of God to make the Jewish people a great Kingdom, with Himself as King; and, had they accepted Jesus when He came, they would to-day have been in the Kingdom, and the Kingdom would have been organized, and the world of mankind would have been paying tribute to the organized Kingdom of Heaven, with Jesus as the reigning King and Lord of all. Had the Jew filled his place in the economy of God's purpose and plan, the Kingdom would have been established, Christ would have been the reigning King, and the world of mankind would be moving along under the sway of His sceptre.

But they did not. And I believe that this word "out" here refers to the Holy Spirit going out from Israel, turning his back upon Israel. How it must have pained the heart of God to go out to another people to set up His Kingdom!

The Seed

So much for the sower. Let us come for a moment to consider the seed. I have just said that I do not believe the sower was the personal Jesus, but the third person of the Godhead—the Holy Spirit.

Now what are we to understand the seed to represent? Let me say, first of all, it is not the Bible, important as that book is. It is not civilization, nor

culture, important as both these are; nor is it the church. *The seed* is the personal Jesus, who is Himself "the word made flesh." Please notice that the personal pronoun is used here; if the Bible had been referred to, or if the gospel, or civilization had been referred to, there would not have been used here the personal pronoun "he." In every instance where reference is made in the explanation of our Lord of this parable, it is with the personal pronoun "he" all the way through, and never "it." Christ is the seed, the Holy Ghost, the sower. The one problem this world has got to grapple with is not education, important as that is; it is not good government simply, important as that is; it is

not hospitals and reformatories, as thoroughly interested in them as I am, and as necessary as I believe them to be. These things must be kept in their proper places and must never be allowed to assume proportions that they are not intended to have. The problem with which the world has to grapple is Jesus. It is Jesus; not the Bible, not the church, not the school, not the hospital, not the reformatory, not the rescue home, not the charities. It is Jesus, distinctly Jesus. To Him the world must look, before Him the world must bow.

Now let us take for a moment a glimpse at the soil. What is the soil? They say that the soil is the hearts of men; and they say well. But let us

not get lost in the plurality of that word. Men and women oftentimes fail to grasp truth, because it is in the plural. What is the soil? It is the heart of a man; here the Holy Spirit sows His seed.

The Harvest

But our final consideration is the harvest. Some of the seed fell by the way side and the birds of the air came and destroyed it. Whose heart does that represent? That is the indifferent heart; that is the heart that paid no attention to the sowing. The sower came along with the seed Jesus. That indifferent heart heard a sermon about Him; the Spirit knocked on the door of that heart and was treated indiffer-

ently, heedlessly, listlessly. Oh, what a great proportion of the world that represents! I look out sometimes and see the vast concourse of unsaved people, and I ask, "What is the cause of it? Have they anything against Jesus?" But it is not that; it is because they are so listless; they have not recognised that He is there.

"Others fell upon the rocky places, where they had not much earth: and straightway they sprang up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away." Whose heart is this? The primary reference is to those who receive Christ intellectually, but who have not given Him

the full assent of their heart, and therefore have not been "born of the Spirit." Theirs is but an intellectual religion, and they cannot stand; they are Christians because it is convenient, because they feel that it is the proper thing; but when the storm comes, there is no root, and they wither. How many in this world are like that! They have a mere head religion; because, forsooth, it is popular to have religion in this country—a religion that merely gives intellectual peace. It has never gone down to the root of the matter; it has never given assent to the reigning and the ruling of the principles of the Cross. They do not grow, they do not get any stronger, and the sickly little plant in the thin soil finally withers and dies.

"And others fell upon the thorns; and the thorns grew up, and choked them." To whom is reference made here? As I see it primarily, it is the man or the woman who has given assent to Christ, but who has allowed the world to come with its thorns pricking and stinging, with its persecutions and its hardships, with its organized forces, and crowd them out; or to those who have become infatuated with worldliness to the extent that their time is taken in that realm, with its social requirements, with its obligations, with all that is incident to the man who is prosperous in the things of this world. He has been religious, his inclinations were religious, but he is infatuated with the world, and it has blinded and obscured the

religion that he once had, and his life religiously speaking amounts to naught. Oh, the sad picture of a man like that. Once he was a bright and promising Christian, but his life has become crowded; more and more his religious duties are set aside, until finally religion is pushed into a little corner. He gets himself into the habit of thinking that he simply must do this and that, until he leaves no time at all for religion to hold sway in his life, and it is dwarfed and droops until its power has at last departed.

It is a sad thing to see some people getting rich. It is a new life. It is a new experience. It is a new position, and it takes the strongest care that one can exert not to let it shrivel and dwarf

their religion. With people who have always had money it is not so easily seen.

" Others fell," thank God, " upon the good ground, and yielded fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." Mark you, the thing that He emphasizes is the fruit, not the growing of the tree. Plenty of us have grown good trees, but we have not borne any fruit. Are you bearing fruit ? Is it one hundred ? Is it sixty ? Is it thirty ? What is the fruitage of the life that we are living to-day ? Remember that the day of final reckoning is coming. That man who was indifferent will be asked, What did you do with Jesus ? Why did you turn a deaf ear to Him ? That man

who simply gives an intellectual assent to Jesus will be asked, Why did you not turn over your heart and your life to Him? The man who allowed Jesus to be crowded out after He had given him the blessing of his life, that man is going to be asked, "Why is it, after I blessed you in your young manhood and you got up in the world—at the time when you could have been of most service you allowed yourself to be crowded? Why did you allow your religion to be dwarfed and your interest for the church and the world and for God and for heaven to diminish?" That is going to be the man most crushed.

But thank God for the fruit bearers, the men and the women who, though

they grow in years and in usefulness in the world's affairs, grow more and more in their allegiance to the King.

IV

THE TARES

The Kingdom is likened unto a man that sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went away. But when the blade sprang up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. And the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? whence then hath it tares? And he said unto them, An enemy hath done this. And the servants say unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he saith, Nay: lest haply while ye gather up the tares, ye root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather up first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.—MATT. xiii. 24–30.

IV

THE TARES

BEFORE we begin the consideration of these separate points we should see our authority for calling this the parable of the tares. By reference to the thirty-sixth verse you will see this. The disciples came to Jesus after He had spoken this parable and asked Him for the interpretation; and, mark you, Jesus interpreted only two of these parables—the first and the second. The remainder were left for us to interpret for ourselves. But for these two He gave us a partial interpretation. When these disciples came to ask for the inter-

pretation they asked for the interpretation of the parable of the tares of the field, so that our authority for calling this the parable of the tares is the disciples themselves. As Jesus started out upon the interpretation, these four points presented themselves to Him, and He expounded them. In the first parable we saw that there was but one sower, the Holy Ghost; that, after Jesus returned, the Holy Ghost came, and came upon one distinct mission—to represent Jesus. The mission of the Holy Ghost from the time that He made His advent on the day of Pentecost until the present hour has been to set forth Jesus Christ as the Son of God—the Saviour of sinners.

In this parable we find another sower

and another seed. Jesus is here, Himself, the sower. In the first parable it was the Holy Ghost Who had come to offer Jesus to the world, to hold Him up as the Saviour of the lost. That was His purpose. Now, in this, Jesus, the seed sown by the Holy Ghost, is Himself the sower; and we shall see later on what character of seed He sows. Jesus the Son of Man in this parable is the sower, but He is not the only sower; there is another—the devil.

Now we will stop to see something of the time and the manner of this sowing. You will see that it is said that after the Son of Man had sowed this seed the devil immediately came and sowed tares. That is to say, as Jesus came sowing His seed the devil

came lurking in His shadow, sowing his seed. Then you will see too that it is said of this sowing that the devil sowed at night—"while they slumbered and slept." Jesus sows His seed in the daytime, in the broad open daytime; in the full glare of the sun. He has nothing to hide. The work of Jesus is a work of broad daylight, because His work is a work for the good of mankind, and that which is for the good of mankind need not be hid: so Jesus comes in the daytime and sows His seed; with this sowing in the daytime, comes Satan at night and sows his seed. The work of Satan has always been a work of darkness. The work of Satan is to pull down, wreck, and destroy mankind. He has for his object destruction in any

way and every way that he can possibly do it. The devil is not wedded to any method. The church is wedded to methods. Would to God we were not! Would to God that the time would come when we should forget that we ever had traditional methods to serve! The devil is wedded to nothing but the destruction of men; and he is perfectly willing that men should have their way—should do as they please. He is perfectly willing that men should prosper; that they should become rich and be respectable if only in the end he may serve his purpose and damn their immortal souls. The devil is not half so much concerned about life as we are. The one concern that he has of life is that he may during life sow seed that

will burn in eternity with fire. That is the purpose of the devil; it is to get man's immortal soul. And so as Jesus comes, sowing His seed, the devil comes sowing his seed. The seed of Jesus is the salvation of the race. The seed of the devil is the damnation of the race, not so much for this life as for the eternity that is to come.

Then again, I should like to have you observe, for the moment, the seed. In the first parable there was but one seed, and that seed was Jesus. Here we have two kinds of seed. First, there is that sown by Jesus Christ; second, that sown by the devil. The seed that Jesus is sowing is the seed of redeemed humanity. It is the seed into which

He has incorporated or incarnated Himself through the work of the Spirit, as was brought out in the first parable. Now, wherever the Spirit sowed seed in good soil and Jesus Christ became incarnated in the human heart, that seed is made ripe and ready for the sowing of the Son of Man, as we find it in this parable. Jesus is sowing the seed of redeemed humanity; that seed is saved men and women. No man is the seed of Jesus until he has been redeemed; until the germ of salvation has been placed in his soul; until Jesus has been incarnated in his heart he is not yet ready for the sowing of the Son of Man. But the moment that he is, Jesus comes, as illustrated in this parable, and takes the redeemed soul

and sows it abroad. Jesus takes redeemed humanity and plants one here, another there, and still another yonder; some in this land, some in other lands, some in all lands—the sowing of the Son of Man.

And the sons of the evil one are his seed. Wherever Jesus has gone sowing His seed, the devil has gone sowing his. That is to say, wherever Jesus has put a good man, the devil has put a bad man by his side; and we may always expect that this will be so. Jesus knew it, and hence He tells us that we must not be surprised when we see it. We sometimes long to be in a land where the devil is not doing his work, but we shall never see that until the King comes. Always, everywhere, wherever

Jesus plants the good seed, the devil plants the bad. The man may not be bad in the sense that the world calls a man bad, but he bears a fruit that is poisonous to the work of the good man Jesus plants.

The word tares ought properly to be translated "darnel." It is a kind of weed that grows up with the wheat in that country where this parable was spoken; and it is so like wheat that you cannot tell the difference until the blossom comes, which has a peculiar poison that is blown about over the wheat, destroying its fruitage. Now this is what the devil is doing, and he will do it until the King comes and puts him under check. The seed which the evil one plants is not by any means

always the heinous sins that we think of in this connection: perhaps it may be the seed of respectability; perhaps it is a seed of great culture and refinement; but no matter how cultured and refined, *the life* into which Jesus has not been poured *is* the seed of *the evil one.* But we must not get discouraged because of the plenitude of this seed of the evil one; it must serve simply to make us more faithful and more careful—more concerned about the fruitage of our lives and the aid we can be to the Master in scattering His seed throughout the world.

But what is this soil into which these two species of seed are sown—good and bad, righteous and unrighteous, saved

and unsaved. I call you to note an expression which I think will throw great light upon this question. "His field"; I would have you underscore and write in capital letters these words, "His field." The sower sowed good seed in His field. That refers to the field of Jesus. The field is the world; the world just as we have it. Now into this world in which man lives these two sowers, Jesus and the devil, are both at work sowing seed; one sowing good seed, and the other bad seed. My brethren, what does that suggest to you? It can suggest but one thing, and that is that this field into which the seeds are being deposited, both the seeds of righteousness and unrighteousness, this field is the property

of Jesus Christ. He owns the field; the world does not belong to the devil; the devil is a usurper. He is trespassing upon territory that does not belong to him. This world belongs to Jesus, every whit of it; not only man, but the entire cosmos, the whole earth, with its mountains and valleys, and its streams and its streamlets, with its great rivers and seas, with its deserts and its fertile fields, with its mines and its mountains, with its treasures rich, with its jewels and its gems; everything that is in it, and on it, and around it, and above it, belongs to Him and not a whit belongs to the devil. It is His by right of creation, of purchase, of supervision, of blessing; this field, in very truth, is His. And oh, what a suggestion there

comes in connection with the thought that whatever you and I possess is by His permission. He has provided it that we may use it. And yet men act as if they were under obligation to the devil and not to God. We sometimes get weary and discouraged because the world is so slow to recognize this fact. But, my brethren, we need not get discouraged: we shall never see it until the King comes, until this dual sowing is stopped, until the devil is checked and all that assist him in sowing the seed of unrighteousness. Until then the world will never see God in His rightful place—His field.

And then I call you to note what we have already passed over, that the sowing of the seed in His field by the

devil was at the time when the sons of the Kingdom slept. There never would have been such progress of Satan had it not been for the sleeping of the sons of the Kingdom. I am talking about the man who is spiritually asleep —the sleep of the church has been the opportunity of the devil. It was while the sons of the Kingdom slept that the devil came and sowed his seed. Oh, my brethren, will there ever come a time when the church will wake up to realize its possibilities, its opportunities, its gracious privileges; when the church will have its eyes opened and see this opportunity into which she may enter and dethrone, as far as possible, the devil and his work? Will there come such a time? I was thinking, the

other day, of one of the opportunities that the devil has got hold of by the sleeping of the church. I was thinking of the failure of the church to realize her obligations to care for the orphan children in this country. Do you know who it was that started the first orphanage in this country? It was started by one who named no religion at all; fraternal orders followed suit, then the state, and finally the church. It has only been within recent years that the church has undertaken this work. I can remember the first Christian orphanage established in the South; it was started by the Baptists of my own native state. The church slept; and while she slept this great opportunity was seized and was used as a means of hold-

ing back and paralysing the church, while it made the other organizations popular.

Then I thought, too, of that long sleep of the church with reference to the care of the sick. The Roman Catholic Church had its eyes opened many years ago, but the Protestant world was long, long centuries with eyes fast closed to this opportunity. Why is it that the sons of the Kingdom, with sense enough to run all sorts of enterprises and all sorts of business ventures, have kept their eyes shut to this great open field and all other such fields so long, and let the devil take them? "While the sons of the Kingdom slept, the devil came and sowed tares." The only trouble with the

church is sleepiness! Oh, the opportunities that we have had for so long; that we have to-day, but may not have to-morrow; and yet we have gone on sleeping, and the devil has slipped along and sowed his tares, and all about us the poison is affecting the wheat. "While the sons of the Kingdom slept!" The enemy never sleeps. I never heard of the devil going to sleep in my life—not even in church. "While the sons of the Kingdom slept," keeping their eyes shut, failing to see and to appreciate the opportunities, failing to think of the needs of the age, the devil came and sowed tares.

My last point is concerning the harvest. What about it? The disciples

were very much concerned about the harvest, and they came and asked for an interpretation of the parable that they might understand about the harvest. The disciples were mistaken, just as many a man is mistaken about the teaching of this harvest. The man to-day who thinks that the Kingdom is the church is made a pessimist by the interpretation of Jesus; for Jesus said, "Let both grow together until the harvest." If the church is the Kingdom, then that means this: never discipline anybody in the church, though one may be ever so wicked; let him stay on and serve the devil and do as he pleases until the end. That is not what He meant, because the church is not the Kingdom. Here is what Jesus means,

as He so clearly explains. He means that in this world where His Kingdom is being established, where the devil is sowing seed along by the side of His seed, we are not to use force. Don't do what the Turks did in Bulgaria—shoot men down because they do not believe as you do. Don't force men into your belief with the theory that the end justifies the means; that is not the way to propagate the Kingdom. Let them alone; do not bring force to bear upon them, for the Kingdom of Jesus is not a Kingdom of force. If you cannot convert them, change them on the inside; just let them stay until the end of the age, when they will be divided: the good shall be taken and shall be given a place in the home of the

blest; and the wicked, the tares, shall be gathered up and thrust into the fire.

I fancy it isn't going to be long before He comes. As God is my witness, I wish He would come to-day! Some of us have been fighting and struggling and toiling as best we could, and have had so many tares to deal with that we just feel like we wish He would come and take entire charge of this field and keep Satan out; but I do not think it will be long before He comes.

"Heed now this message from your
King,
Whose Word holds true to-day;
In each disciple's heart should ring,
'Love' — 'bless' — 'do good' —and
'pray.'

Love with His love; a heaven-born
thing,
Which never knows decay;
Unsullied as an Angel's wing—
'Love'—'bless'—'do good'—and
'pray.'

Bless those around you, though the
sting
Of sin in them has sway;
Though they should naught but curses
fling,
'Love'—'bless'—'do good'—and
'pray.'

Do good by deed, and words which wing
To weary hearts their way;
Go on till lips with gladness sing—
'Love'—'bless'—'do good'—and
'pray.'

Pray till a tender love shall spring,
His Spirit's softening ray;
Such love as He alone can bring—
'Love'—'bless'—'do good'—and
'pray.'

When silvery bells at evening ring,
And cheer us on the way,
So may these words from Christ our
King—
'Love'—'bless'—'do good'—and
'pray.'"

V

THE MUSTARD SEED

The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is less than all seeds; but when it is grown, it is greater than the herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the heaven come and lodge in the branches thereof.—MATT. xiii. 31, 32.

V

THE MUSTARD SEED

IN the second parable we had the sower, Jesus the Son of Man; the seed, the sons of the Kingdom; the soil, this world in which we live; and the harvest, the end of the age. Also the devil sowing tares.

Now in this parable we find the same four points presenting themselves, the sower, the seed, the soil, and the harvest. The sower here is still Jesus the Son of Man; the seed, the sons of the Kingdom; the soil is this world; the harvest is still the end of the age. Matthew seems to indicate that this

parable, the parable of the mustard seed, was given immediately after the first two; that is to say, Jesus finished the second parable and went immediately into the third. But if we read Luke's account it would seem that this parable was not given immediately after the other two, but that it was given while Jesus was in the synagogue on the Sabbath day. On that occasion He healed a woman who had been sick for eighteen years, and had baffled the skill of physicians, and because He healed her there was complaint lodged against Him by the ruler of the synagogue, who charged that He had desecrated the Sabbath day and also desecrated the synagogue, the house of God. And you are familiar with the severe

rebuke that Jesus gave to this ruler of the synagogue, and how this rebuke put him and his confederates to shame. Immediately, according to Luke's rendering of these parables, Jesus gave this parable of the mustard seed. Now, I think that it is very reasonable to suppose that both Matthew and Luke were right in regard to time. I think Matthew states it exactly as it occurred; that in the first instance Jesus did submit all these parables, one immediately after the other, and in Luke's account it is stated exactly as it occurred, and Jesus submitted it in the synagogue. It is only reasonable to suppose that Jesus often repeated these parables, illustrating His teachings concerning the Kingdom.

But what is the significance of the parable of the mustard seed ? In order to see it, we shall have to review the first two, and then to look at the parable which follows.

In the first parable we have the Holy Ghost, the sower. He is come to sow the seed, Jesus Christ. In the second parable, the seed, Jesus, has been sown and has sprung up in the hearts and lives of men and women, and He Himself becomes the sower of the seed of regenerated mankind. So that we have here set forth in the first two parables the basic elements of the Kingdom of Heaven. We have the foundation work done. Now, if we go forward and see the parable of the leaven we shall see that these two parables are given to

set forth the method of the development of the Kingdom. The parable of the mustard seed sets forth the method of the spread of the Kingdom externally; the parable of the leaven gives us the internal development.

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed." A definite grain of mustard seed, which a certain man took and sowed in his field and it sprang up and became a tree so large that its branches formed a shelter for the birds of the air. What is the significance of this parable? It is, as I have just said, to set forth the method of the external development of the Kingdom. Let it be remembered that Jesus was speaking this parable in

Palestine ; in a country where a mustard plant is a very different plant from what the mustard plant is with us. It is larger ; it becomes a huge herb in the field, with branches and trunk. So Jesus is not using an abnormal or in any way overdrawn figure of speech. Doubtless when He first spoke this parable, His eyes rested upon such a plant, and He saw the birds as they flitted among its branches.

Let us see the likeness between the mustard seed and the Kingdom of Heaven as we have it set forth. First, this likeness is seen in the smallness of its beginning. The mustard seed is among the smallest of seeds ; and so was the Kingdom of Heaven in its beginning. As you will remember, it began with

one man. I believe that this mustard seed, this single mustard seed which was the beginning of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, was the Apostle Peter. You remember the instance when Jesus said to His disciples, "Whom do men say that I am," and they said, "Some Elias, some Moses, some Jeremias, or one of the prophets." Then said Jesus, "Whom say ye that I am?" That question of Jesus was addressed to the entire number of His disciples, but there was one man that made the confession. Any one of them might have been in the place of Peter. But Peter was the one ready with an answer, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of God." What follows? Immediately after Peter spoke Jesus spoke a most signi-

ficant word concerning the Kingdom: "Behold, thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church—my spiritual community;" not the Kingdom, but the spiritual community embraced within the Kingdom. "Upon this rock, the rock of your confession, I will build my church, my spiritual community, the great world church, the great spiritual brotherhood. And the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it; and I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom." Here is a most significant and at the same time the most misunderstood statement that Jesus ever made. Do not misread what Jesus said. Do not be afraid you will become a Roman Catholic if you stick to the literal words of Jesus; stick to them,

if you do become a Roman Catholic. Rome thus interprets it: "And I will give unto thee the keys of the church"; but it is not so stated. What He said was this: "I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom." I, for one, believe that Jesus literally meant what He said. Peter being the first to answer the question, Peter being the first to confess Him, Jesus handed to Him the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. And when do we find these keys brought into service? When do we find them unlocking the door of the Kingdom of Heaven? Just step over a few days to the day of Pentecost, when the Kingdom was formally launched; we say that the church was formed; that was the day of the launching of the Kingdom

of Heaven, before the church was born; the church was born after men became subjects of the Kingdom. It was formed by the men who, because they had become subjects of the King, were ready for organization. The unlocking of the Kingdom of Heaven was done by Peter on the day of Pentecost. In the preaching of that sermon, under the power of the Holy Ghost, Peter turned the keys that unlocked the Kingdom of Heaven and let the sons of men from all parts of the earth for all time enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Then again, the mustard seed is an apt illustration of the Kingdom in the rapidity of its growth. There is no plant, perhaps, more rapid in its de-

velopment than the mustard. So it is with the Kingdom. We sometimes think of the slow progress of the Kingdom of Heaven ; and it does look slow when we see how small a part of this world the Kingdom of Heaven has ever been introduced into. But, my brethren, when we see the character of the Kingdom, and the purpose of the Kingdom, and consider that in its formation it was never contemplated that all humanity should be subjected to the King until His coming, we can better understand. When we take this view of it we are not so pessimistic with reference to the progress of the Kingdom of Heaven. After all, do you know any religion, any system of teaching, any philosophy, any government that has made the progress in

the history of the world that the Kingdom of Heaven has made? Is there anything like it? Look at it on the day of Pentecost in its simple beginning. See the one seed Peter, the mouthpiece of Heaven, proclaiming the first message of the Kingdom of Heaven under the inspiration and the power of the Holy Ghost. See under the administration of the apostles themselves the rapidity of its growth from this single seed. See in the early centuries of the church how even at the fourth century this single seed had produced such a plant as that it had become under the reign of Constantine the one great state religion. Its very power, its very size, its very progress became its great weakness, so that it

had a period of decline. I am not speaking of it so much in its work of individual redemption; I am speaking of it in its great influence, in its great external bearing. See it as it appears in the history of the world. No section of the world that has not known of the Kingdom of Heaven has had the progress of that section where the Kingdom of Heaven has been preached. No people on earth have had such progress as those people where that opportunity has been afforded. Every great invention, every great line of progress that we to-day as a civilized world are enjoying, is the fruitage of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Again, the mustard seed has in itself certain antidotal and remedial qualities

that no other agent possesses. It is a fact that the mustard plant is an antidote to certain poisons that no other plant affords. The mustard is used in its various forms as a remedial agent in all parts of the world, civilized and uncivilized as well. So is the Kingdom of Heaven. It is antidotal in its character. It is remedial in its operations. No community can grow godlessness and evil so rapidly in the presence of the sons of the Kingdom. There is something in the sons of the Kingdom that makes them antidotal to sin, to iniquity. There is something in us as sons of the Kingdom that makes it impossible for sin to flourish in our presence, though we may not speak a word of condemnation.

Years ago I had the privilege of

visiting Bella Cook, a woman who for years and years was bed-ridden, on account of the severest form of inflammatory rheumatism. Every muscle in her body practically was drawn out of shape; never a moment when she was awake was she free from pain, and yet for thirty-five years Bella Cook lay there without a complaint—a daughter of the Kingdom. She used to live in a section of the city that was very notorious for evil. Somebody said to her, "Are you going to stay here in the midst of this awful corruption, with these wicked characters thronging about your door? Aren't you afraid that there will some harm come to you, and isn't it very distasteful to hear the tramp of such impure feet; to see

through your window, as you lie upon your bed, the march of such an army of sinners as you see here?" But Bella Cook said, "No, I am not afraid; I have something within which gives me peace and courage"; and she kept on living there. One after another of these characters began to leave, to move on, until long before Bella Cook died, even when I paid her that last visit, the whole section had been deserted by those devotees of sin; there was not a public vice within quite a radius of her house. She lived as a daughter of the King; she served as best she could under the circumstances; and there, shining as a light, penetrating the dense darkness of that community, her life was an antidote to sin and a remedy

for defilement. Don't come talking to me about being ready to go to Africa to live in the jungles, to risk your life day by day, until you show your willingness to live happily and contentedly in such an atmosphere at home, where you may be of service, uplifting and developing those around you. My brethren, the time has come, and I feel it more and more, when we who are the sons of the Kingdom, the subjects of the King, should realize our antidotal and remedial character; we must become willing to lay aside some of our comforts, and shine our light in places of dense darkness at home as well as in the foreign field.

Finally, I want to say that the similarity of the mustard plant to the

Kingdom of Heaven is in the use made of its branches. In the case of the mustard plant the birds of the air rested among its branches; birds of all kinds lived in that community. And so it is with the Kingdom; the Kingdom of Heaven is the resort for all classes of men when they find out its character. There is that large class, and I would that it were larger, the men and the women who flee to its branches for instruction, for light, and for life in the day when they are convicted of their unsaved condition. They come that they may have the way of salvation pointed out to them by the sons of the Kingdom. Here they come flocking to us, hiding within the branches of our influence and our life.

Then there is that other great crowd that is flocking to the branches of the Kingdom, desiring such succour as a poor, throbbing, broken, discouraged heart alone knows how to appreciate. Thing have gone wrong; life seems to be a failure; hope has vanished, and they come, flocking to the branches of the mustard plant. They want sympathy; they want instruction and help; they want that which they have become persuaded is theirs when they become sons of the Kingdom.

Then there is that other large army; I would that it were not so large—men and women who are flocking for business reasons, with a hope that they may obtain a bit of the loaves and fishes that such a federation may possibly bring

to them. Some are desirous of the loaves and fishes of society and congenial association. Some are after the loaves and fishes of financial interests. I have seen illustrations of both of them by the thousands. I have in mind a man who came to this very city. I knew him before he came here. He never knew what the word society meant in his own town. He was perfectly content in his old home to live the plain, the honest, the toiling, the godly man's life. When he came to this city, he was told that he ought to join a certain church, for the reason that he would find a higher and better social atmosphere in which his family could move; and though I had known him for a long time, he said to me, "You

cannot expect me to join your church; I will be your sympathizer and friend, but I cannot join your church."

Let us remember that Jesus Himself, the King, is watching over the sons of the Kingdom while the Kingdom is being prepared in the hearts of men. He is as much watching over the plant as it grows, as if He were here in person. He sees who comes to the shelter of the tree. He sees the motive. He sees the dynamic that propels them, whether it is selfish and sordid, or whether it is Christlike. He sees and He knows. And when the winds of persecution come along and the branches are shaken, then we, too, shall see. Men and women who have more interest in the gratification of their personal business relations

than they have in the Kingdom, when the testing time comes will not stay. And when He comes, only those who have remained true, who have endured the winds, will under Him take control of the Kingdom.

VI

THE LEAVEN

The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened.—MATT. xiii. 33.

VI

THE LEAVEN

MANY regard this as the most difficult of these parables. There are two views of its interpretation generally accepted, and I shall state them both to you, and then endeavour to show you how I interpret it. In the first place there are those who regard this parable as intending to set forth the growth of the church, and the leaven, therefore, is regarded as the gospel. Then there is that class, not so large as the first, who hold that the parable is intended to set forth the obstacles in the way of the Kingdom, and that the leaven represents not the gospel, but sin.

I do not accept the first interpretation, because I do not believe that the Kingdom of Heaven is the church. I have stated this so frequently that I feel it is scarcely worth while to call attention to it again. Those who hold it claim that it is intended to teach that the church, in this dispensation, is to conquer the whole world and subjugate man in all relations of life to the will of God, when, as a matter of fact, the teaching of Jesus is that, in this dispensation, neither the church nor the Kingdom is to win this world. In Matthew's Gospel, 24th chapter, we have Jesus' plain words: "And as were the days of Noah, so shall be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days which were before the flood they

were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall be the coming of the Son of Man. Then shall two men be in the field; one is taken, one is left: two women shall be grinding at the mill; one is taken, and one is left. Watch therefore: for ye know not on what day your Lord cometh." These are the words of Jesus, and if they teach anything at all, they teach that at His second coming the world will be practically as we have it to-day. Some will be saved and others will be lost; some will be taken and some will be left. So that view of this parable that repre-

sents the church as an all-conquering force before our Lord returns is a view that is in direct antagonism to what Jesus Christ Himself taught.

With reference to the second view, I want to say this : I can no more accept it than I can the first. I don't believe that the parable is intended to set forth the nature of the obstacles that the Kingdom has to encounter, and most certainly do I not believe that the leaven is intended to represent sin in this connection. Jesus said, "The Kingdom of Heaven"—not the Kingdom of Satan —"The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened." If leaven is to

represent sin, then our Lord made a mistake in the figure that He used, for He says that the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven. I am aware of the fact that in other parts of the Bible leaven is used to represent sin, but our Lord is not wedded to any figure. The serpent is also used to represent Satan, and yet no one would say that it represented him when uplifted in the wilderness.

Jesus was trying to show them something of the nature and the character of the progress of the Kingdom within. As He spoke, possibly He saw some women making up dough, taking the leaven, putting it inside the meal, and setting it aside for the leavening process to complete itself; and He

referred to it as an illustration of the method and the manner of the progress of His Kingdom, which first was individual and internal. He used an experience with which He was intimately acquainted.

Our Lord had no doubt aided His mother in preparing many a loaf of bread. The women of those days ground the corn, turned the stones themselves, and then prepared the food. And I think our Lord, the Model Son, the Model Child, never sat by and saw His mother turning those heavy stones without giving a helping hand; and so He was perfectly familiar with the details of the whole process. He was referring back, in the illustration, to His experience to set forth the thing that

He was trying to teach. You will also see how this view is in perfect harmony with the entire parabolic teaching concerning the Kingdom of Heaven. In our last parable we saw the method of the external growth of the Kingdom. Here we have the internal growth of the Kingdom. Jesus is trying to show that the Kingdom is not merely an external matter—something tangible, something that we can see and feel, but that it is something deeper than that. This parable is simply intended to show how the Kingdom of Heaven works internally as well as externally. It has nothing whatever to do with the matter of externals except as externals are the natural outcome of internal conditions.

You find in it the four points which correspond to the four points presented in the other parables. Corresponding with the sower is the woman who takes the leaven and puts it in the meal. In my judgment this woman represents the Holy Spirit. Then there is the leaven, corresponding with the seed, in my judgment representing the Saviour of men. Then there is the meal—the soil—representing, not this world of men and women, but representing the individual human heart. Then, corresponding with the harvest, there is the consummation of the process, the time when the full leavening process of the human heart has been completed. Remember, we are not dealing with externals: we have here a parable

dealing with individuals, and the meal is used to represent nothing more nor less than the human heart, into which the Holy Spirit, represented by the woman with the leaven, enters.

There has been a good deal said about the three measures of meal and what they represent. Why did our Lord say the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal? Some have said that this is intended to represent the three then known continents, Europe, Asia, and Africa. But I do not believe it is so. I think that these three measures of meal were intended to represent the trinity of man—the soul, the spirit, and the body. Again let me remind you that this is a parable

of individualism and is dealing distinctively with the question of the individual, and his heart is the soil in which this work is to be done, in which the leavening process is to be carried to completion.

In what respect, therefore, with this view of it, do we find the leaven representing the Kingdom of Heaven? In the first place, it is true in that the leaven does its work internally and hidden from the view of man. No man can see the leavening process as it operates. The leaven is taken and placed inside the lump of dough, inside the meal, and there its work is done, hidden from view; it is a work that goes on down deep below where no human eye can see its operations. It is hidden, and so is

the Kingdom of Heaven in the heart of man. The Kingdom of Heaven, operating in the human heart, is a hidden process. No eye can see it, no hand can feel it; it is a hidden, internal working. And, my brethren, the more rigidly we insist upon the fact that the Kingdom of Heaven is a hidden process, working in the heart of man, the more in keeping we shall find ourselves with the entire spirit of the gospel. I have in my past life emphasized greatly the need of reforms; and I would still insist upon them. That is better than nothing, but reformation is not salvation; reformation is only surface deep. What we want is first of all the internal leavening of the heart, which embraces the whole trinity of man. When the heart is

leavened the mind is leavened, and the body is leavened also.

I remember when I first began to preach I was very fond of reading Henry Ward Beecher. For variety of illustration, perhaps, no man has ever surpassed him. His illustrations were not always correct; but he was great, he was tremendous in his descriptive powers. In those early days I remember reading an illustration of his intended to set forth two great fundamental doctrines, one the fall of man and the other his regeneration. He said, "Here is a picture hanging on the wall. It is without a flaw. The framework is perfect and at first the picture is perfect. That picture represents Adam, our first parent, made in the

image of God, perfect physically and spiritually, and as time passes by, dust and dirt accumulate upon the face of the picture ; the canvas becomes blurred and smoky ; the image itself becomes marred ; finally it is so far obliterated by dust and dirt that you cannot tell what is represented. That," says Beecher, " represents the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. Sin accumulated upon his heart and upon his life until that originally perfect picture that he had at the beginning is destroyed. So far, so good." Then he proceeds to illustrate regeneration and faith. He says, " The housekeeper comes and takes that picture down, all marred and blurred, and takes some soap and a rag and washes all the grease and dirt

off it and polishes up the framework, and there is restored the original, the perfect picture. That is regeneration." That is not regeneration, and it is at that very line of teaching that our Lord is striking a blow in this parable. Regeneration, if it is no more than that, would be a mere external washing up of a man's moral life. Regeneration, however, is a process that goes farther than that, deeper than that. It is the housekeeper taking down that picture and not washing it off, but cutting it out and destroying it and putting in that framework another picture; not the picture of the original Adam, but something more than Adam, something more than Adam could ever be—a picture of our risen Lord Jesus Christ.

That is the process of regeneration, and that is the work upon which the Kingdom of Heaven must be founded.

Again you will see that this leaven represents the Kingdom in its disintegrating and diffusionary character. When you first put the leaven into the lump, it begins at once, under careful conditions, to disintegrate, to break itself into fragments; then these fragments into still finer fragments, and so on, until it becomes a gas and finds its way into every particle of the meal. There is not a single atom that does not feel the disintegrating process that is going on deep down beneath where the eye cannot see. It is the Kingdom of Heaven in the human heart. The

leaven represents Jesus Christ enthroned in a man's heart. What does He do ? He diffuses Himself into every part and particle of a man's life and conduct, into his thought, into the region of his brain, into the region of his intellect. My brethren, a man in whose heart Jesus has been enthroned as reigning Lord sees things differently from what he saw them before. He understands differently ; his intellect becomes sharper toward spiritual things ; his mental perception of spiritual things becomes stronger. He is made to understand and fathom that which hitherto was beyond his power to understand and fathom, diffusing Himself into the very region of a man's brain, framing his thought-life as well as his conduct.

I am sure that we have not been interested enough in the glorious possibilities of having our vision enlarged and our mental perception quickened. I am sure that Jesus has not been given the important place and purpose for which He would come in and take possession of our hearts and lives. Not only does He diffuse Himself throughout the region of the heart and the region of the life, but every fibre of the real surrendered Christian becomes a part of the diffusionary work of Jesus Christ. We are just coming, in these days, to realize the fact that our Lord is not simply the Lord of our heart, but that He is the Lord of our head; He is the Lord of the body; He proposes to quicken these mortal bodies. Jesus

Christ, the leaven, placed by the Holy Spirit in the human heart, begins at once, if He is given the proper atmosphere, the proper right, the proper sway, to diffuse Himself into every part and parcel of a man's being, until his whole life feels the presence, the power of the inward diffusion of divine grace. His social life, his business life, his political life, all are penetrated by it.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven in the silent manner of its work. Leaven does not make any fuss about its work; there are no explosions; it rings no bells, blows no trumpets. It does its work quietly, without ostentation; slowly but surely it proceeds. When once Jesus, by the Holy Ghost, has been incorporated into your life,

the work begins. Speaking for myself, I cannot feel easy in the presence of this noisy, fussy religion. It may suit some people, but somehow fails to satisfy me. Less and less do I feel myself in sympathy with the man who is ever boasting about his spiritual achievements. It is contrary to the teaching concerning the Kingdom. This leaven, Christ in the heart, is a quiet, unostentatious work, going steadily and silently ahead, reaching farther and farther until the whole lump is leavened and a man's life is conformed to the will of his Father. That is the process of the Christian life; that is the process of the Kingdom of Heaven in a human heart. Luke says, "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you." Jesus, in that

instance, was referring to the exact lesson that He was endeavouring to teach in this parable, that it is an internal matter; it is both internal and external, as illustrated by this parable and the one preceding.

Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like leaven in the certainty of its final accomplishment. Just put the leaven in, give it the proper attention, the proper atmosphere, and the process will be completed in due time. Just let it do its work. What we want to do if we want the leavening process to go ahead is to see to it that the proper conditions are maintained. So is the Kingdom of Heaven. So is Jesus Christ, when once He becomes Lord and Master. The leavening process begins; it is our

business to see to it that He has the proper atmosphere; that there is the warmth of prayer and the moisture of the Spirit's presence as we seek Him and endeavour to fall in line; that our spiritual natures are sufficiently warm and conformed to the will of God: then the leavening process silently and slowly proceeds, unseen, except in its great consummation.

Have you read that book, *Down in Water Street*, by Sam Hadley, late superintendent of the Jerry McAuley Mission in New York? It is simply told, and yet it is a masterful presentation of the method of the work of the Holy Spirit in conforming the lives and conduct of men and women to the standard of Heaven. In that book there

are fifty pictures perhaps, pictures of men and women, of good address. Who are they? They look to be the bankers and lawyers, doctors and preachers of that section; and, indeed, some of them are. Some are lawyers, some doctors, a few preachers, many merchants. Who are they and whence came they? They are men and women who were, a few years ago, the river pirates, thieves and thugs, drunkards and gamblers, opium fiends, etc., who wandered into the Jerry McAuley Mission, staggering, some of them stupefied by opium, but who became there conscious of their sin and shame. Some of them came in for shelter; some came for a bowl of soup; perhaps they came for a kind word. That is who

they were, and as they staggered in, they met the Son of Man. They received Him into their hearts, though the soil was vile and vulgar. The result was that He began to do His work, perhaps first reaching out to master the appetite that had damned them, controlling the natures that wrecked them; then out into other branches of their lives, out and on, penetrating every particle of their being until at last they are ripened characters, fit for the service of the Master.

But let me say one other word: the meal had to be prepared. They took a lump of yesterday's meal, put it into the freshly prepared meal, then placed it aside, under proper conditions, until

the leavening process was complete. The dry meal would not do. It had to be moistened, worked; preparation had to be made before it was in fit condition to receive the leaven. So is the Kingdom of Heaven in the human heart. There is all the power needed in Jesus Christ. In Him is all power in heaven and earth; having all power, He can do the work of conforming a human heart to the will of God. But unless we prepare for Him and co-operate with Him in the work, it cannot be done. The man who does nothing but sit down and says, "Jesus is my Lord and Master, and I wait for Him to do the work," will never get the result. The unsaved man who says, "I realize all this truth in Jesus and wait

for Him to do His work in my life," will never get it done. He first is prepared by accepting Jesus, and then begins to conform his life to the requirements that Jesus makes.

Just a word about the culmination. Jesus is not referring to the world here, for His parable does not touch the world: hence it does not teach that the world is to be leavened; it does not teach, therefore, that the world is to be saved in this dispensation. It has reference to the individual, the individual whose heart has been penetrated and whose life has the working of the leaven. Those who are not thus prepared will know nothing of the rapture of the coming of the Son of Man. How significant is this parable! How deep it

is; how tremendous its sweep! How the world needs to comprehend it! We are talking much about the redemption of society. We are talking about the salvation of the world, but let me say to you that there will never be any redemption of society save as society is redeemed one by one.

VII

THE HIDDEN TREASURE

The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in the field ; which a man found, and hid ; and in his joy he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.—MATT. xiii. 44.

VII

THE HIDDEN TREASURE

THE four parables we have studied were submitted by Jesus to the multitude. In that multitude were men and women of all grades, characters, and temperaments. The last three, upon the study of which we are entering now, were submitted by Jesus to the disciples apart from the multitude. When Jesus finished speaking to the multitude, giving them the first four parables, He returned into a house alone with His disciples, and gave to them a partial interpretation of these parables. The meaning of the parables

was so evident that the people were able to interpret them for the most part. But when they were apart His disciples asked Him concerning one of these parables, the parable of the tares, and Jesus went a bit farther into the interpretation of it, and then He proceeded to give them, in this quiet family gathering, these other three: the parable of the hidden treasure, the pearl of great price, and the dragnet. There is a very significant reason in my mind why Jesus waited until He got His disciples apart from the crowd to give them these last three parables. I think it was because in the first instance, when He was dealing with the multitude, He was submitting elementary principles, principles so elementary that any-

body could interpret them in a general sense. In the remaining three, Jesus is dealing with some fundamental questions; they are questions that cannot be properly taught to a crowd. There are some things that the crowd cannot take in; and he is a wise preacher who can properly divide men and women and know something of the opportunity that presents itself to him. A man is wasting his time who is attempting to talk fundamental principles of the Christian life to the man who has never been born again. What we want to do is to follow the Master's plan; when we are dealing with elementary principles we can deal with the crowd. When we are dealing with the principles that are fundamental, then we are to deal with

that select band of disciples who are prepared for the stronger meat. "The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a treasure hid in the field; which a man found, and hid; and in his joy he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." I want you to catch the words "buyeth that field"; the field in which the treasure has been found, in which the treasure has been hid. Now, what is the significance of this parable? One of the interpretations is that the Kingdom of Heaven is the church. The other is the less popular interpretation held by those who do not regard the Kingdom of Heaven as the church, but as this world with men and women being prepared by our Lord for the time of His

return when He is to reign over this earth.

The first of these interpretations, the more popular one, I give you first—though let me say that I do not in any sense hold to it. It is this: that the treasure hidden in the field and then found is the salvation of Jesus Christ; it is grace accepted and applied to the human heart, and that the man who finds this treasure, salvation, and hides it, and then goes off and sells all that he has and comes back and buys it, is the sinner seeking salvation and obtaining it.

I do not hold in the slightest to that interpretation, although it is the one held by the vast majority of Christian people. I cannot accept it, first of

all, because if the hidden treasure is salvation, and if a man has to find it and hide it and go and sell all that he has and buy it, then we have salvation presented to us as the result of the action on the part of man; we have salvation by works. A salvation that can be bought, a salvation of character, without atonement, without sacrifice, is not the salvation of the New Testament. If that interpretation be true, then the monasticism of the Roman Catholic Church is correct; then salvation is obtained by self-denial, by penance; and the old monks who shave one side of their heads and lie about in the monasteries are correct, and that is the form of life we ought all to adopt.

But we all know that this is not the

salvation of the New Testament. We know that no man can buy salvation. It is distinctly presented to us without money and without price. If somebody says at this juncture, "What of the rich young ruler to whom Jesus said, 'One thing thou lackest; go sell what thou hast and give to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven'"? my answer is, first, a question, "What about the first thing Jesus said to that rich young ruler?" The first thing was, "Why callest thou Me good? There is none good save God." "Do you call Me good with that understanding? If so, then you accept My deity, and if you accept My deity then you are prepared to deal with the question of life ethics," and He then

discourses with the young man concerning the ethical side of the Christian life; but in no sense does Jesus teach to any people or at any time that a man can buy grace or salvation of God, whether it be the price of his own bodily suffering or the price of dollars and cents.

Jesus' answer to the young ruler, "Go sell what thou hast," was a mere test. He had professed Jesus as "Good Master," and this would test his profession.

Now, the other interpretation, and the one which I hold, is this: The hidden treasure is Israel, the Jew, and the One who finds this treasure is Jesus Christ Himself, and the price that He

pays is His death on the Cross, giving up all that He had. The field that was purchased is the field of humanity, in which the Jew himself is only a factor. Let us see for a moment how this teaching agrees with the teaching of Scripture concerning Israel. Israel is God's treasure. He so speaks of that nation. David, in the 135th Psalm, fourth verse, says, "For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto Himself and Israel for His peculiar treasure." Here we have Israel presented to us as the peculiar treasure of God. God planned first of all that Israel should make up the Kingdom. Jesus came primarily to Israel. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But to as many as did receive Him, to them

gave He power to become the Sons of God." He came to Israel and Irsael rejected Him, and as the result Israel was hidden away; she is hidden to-day as a nation. Israel remains hid in the great field of humanity. Israel declined the offer of salvation through the Christ, and Israel as a nation was hidden; scattered throughout all lands. You will go to no country where you will not find the Jew. They are scattered in all lands, without a land of their own, without a government. They may talk as much as they like about reinhabiting Jerusalem; but the Jew as a nation will never inhabit Jerusalem until the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ. That will be the day for Israel; she will open her eyes and acknowledge

that this Jesus of the Manger and of the Cross is the promised Messiah of Israel, and then Israel will bow that stubborn knee and accept Jesus Christ, and then Israel as a nation will be reinstated, and will become the great evangelizing force of the world in that period of millennial triumph.

"And in his joy he goeth and selleth all that He hath." He had already left His possessions in Heaven; His citizenship in Heaven had been laid aside, and he had taken upon Himself the infirmity of man. But He goeth with rejoicing, for He is not to be disappointed, and selleth all that He hath, and buyeth the field in which this treasure is hid. What was it that He

sold? He gave up His life; that is the last of His possessions, and He sells that which He hath and buyeth that field. "Buyeth that field"; that field of humanity, in which the race Israel was scattered, in which the race Israel was hidden. So that this sacrifice of Jesus incorporates salvation for the Gentile world as well as for the Jew. He bought the whole field inwhich the Jew was hidden, and where the Gentile reigned supreme; so that Gentile and Jew as individuals are purchased by the price of the life of the Son of God, which is all that He had. It seems to me that there could be nothing clearer. It seems to me that any other interpretation would rob the Scriptures of all their prophetic beauty

and change the form and figure of the whole New Testament scheme of redemption.

But it is not only true from this standpoint, but it is in perfect accord with all the teachings of Jesus Christ concerning the plan of salvation. It puts the Jew and the Gentile into the proper relationship to the great question of world-wide salvation. It makes no distinction ; it is the purchase of the field of humanity in which Jew and Gentile are together mixed, in which there is no distinction of race or nationality ; it puts the whole world, of whatever grade or colour or nationality, upon the one plan of salvation by grace. It is in strict keeping likewise with the plan of

redemption, in that salvation is made to result from the complete sacrifice of Jesus Christ. There is no such thing taught in the Scriptures as salvation by works. The man who teaches salvation as the result of any ethical process teaches that which is not in the Word of God; and there is a vast deal of that kind of teaching now. If Jesus is to be purchased by the sale of anything, then all the teaching of the church in all the ages past is false and she has built upon a wrong foundation. Oh, how we have delighted in the fact that we could go to a lost and ruined world and present the salvation of Jesus Christ as a salvation to be obtained without money and without price. How we have delighted to extend a helping hand

to the man who is down and say to him, "You need and can obtain salvation of Christ without price; no matter if you are an ungodly sinner, vile with sin; come to Jesus and His blood will cover your sin; come look into the face of One who is just as anxious to save a sin-begrimed soul with all the filth of the world hanging to him as to save the soul of the greatest moralist in the community." That is the gospel that we preach; that is the gospel that has built churches all over this community; that is the gospel that has built hospitals and homes of refuge; that is the gospel that has built Christian colleges and seminaries. That is the gospel that has comforted us in the days of suffering and sorrow; the gospel of

grace freely bestowed without money and without price.

It is in keeping also with the nature of the salvation of Jesus in that it represents Jesus and not the sinner as the seeker. I have heard preachers urge the unsaved to seek Jesus. I have heard them call them to come to the front seat and there kneel and seek Jesus. I have no objection to the coming to the front seat or to any other plan, provided it does not suggest a false conception of Jesus. I have known people to seek Jesus for years and never find Him. I have in mind a young man, a chum in boyhood days, who used to go to the front bench with me, seeking Jesus. We have knelt at many

a front bench together at a protracted meeting and cried until our hearts would nearly break. I can almost hear him cry now. It seems to me that he could cry with more feeling and more pathos, with a greater depth of agony, than anybody I ever knew. And I left him, when I accepted Jesus Christ and was adopted into His blessed Kingdom; I left him still at the anxious seat seeking Jesus. Many years after that I was back in the old home section; and neighbours, learning that I was coming, arranged for me to preach out in a great arbour in front of my old grandmother's home. People came from all parts of the country. Old friends and relatives, who had not seen me for years—not since I was grown up to manhood—

had come for the purpose of attending this service. One of the sights that filled me with most pleasure was that old chum and distant relative, the boy with whom I had frolicked many a happy day. When I finished preaching he rushed up to me and with arms around each other, we stood talking. I said, "You are to spend the night with me," and he said, "No, I must go back home to my wife and children." "Well, just send word you are going to spend the night with me." He did so, and we went back into the old room where we used to frolic in bed at night, where we had kicked each other out of bed a hundred times. There in that old bed, once more boys, I said to him, "Have you ever found Jesus?" He hesitated

a moment before he said, "No." "Have you continued to seek Him?" "Yes, and I expect to be seeking Him until I die. I will never give up." I said, "Why haven't you found Him?" "I do not know. I have thought of this many a time when I have thought of your being a preacher, and wondered why it was that I just could not find Jesus. I have tried as hard as you ever did and as hard as anybody ever did." I said, "Will you let me tell you the secret of it?" "Yes, if you can." "You have not found Jesus because you have not realized the fact that all this time and even before you began to seek Jesus, He was seeking you." It didn't take hold of him at first. He asked me some questions about it, and I put

it to him again. "Jesus is seeking you. He came to this world to seek and to save that which was lost. Are you lost?" "Of course I am." "Well, He is seeking you, instead of your seeking Him; you have been running from Him, thinking that you were seeking Him. You were seeking something else besides Jesus. You have been seeking feeling; you have been seeking somebody else's experience. Jesus has been seeking you; now stop running after experience and let Jesus find you right here and now." I gave him John iii. 16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life." In a moment or two I felt an arm slip

around my neck and he began to cry; but it was not the cry of the seeker; it was the rejoicing cry of the saved. There in that bed where we had frolicked in childhood days he stopped running after an experience and simply let Jesus find him.

If there is any one thing that this world needs to know to-day more than another it is that Jesus is seeking the lost; that that is His first business; that is what brought him here; that is what caused Him to give His life on Calvary. It was to find the lost. He is seeking after you to-day with all His heart of love; He is not angry; He is not waiting to be appeased, but He is seeking to find you.

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a treasure hid in a field; which a man found, and hid; and in his joy he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field"; your field and mine, the Jew's field and the Gentile's; the great broad field of humanity. Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross was broad enough to comprehend every race and every nation and every man and every woman in all the nations of the earth.

Somebody may say, "That sounds of Universalism." It is Universalism in so far as its provision is concerned. I shall never forget when I was ordained to preach, and a Presbytery of strong, able theologians examined me. I did not know much theology. I did not

know much about the Bible; but I had a bit of common sense. It was known by members of the Presbytery, my pastor in particular, that I was not just so strong on the doctrine of election as they thought I ought to be. This Presbytery was made up of some old-time electionists, and they decided to give me a grilling on the subject of election, and this was the question that they propounded. Said they, "Do you believe in election?" "Yes, sir." That surprised them. "You do!" "Yes, sir." "Do you believe in fore-ordination?" "Yes, sir." "You do!" Then they scratched their heads a bit and looked at one another as if to say, "There is something lower down if we can get to it." "Do you believe

in free agency?" "Yes, sir." "Do you believe that there is anybody in Heaven that could have been in hell?" "Yes, sir," said I. Then they began to look extremely interested. "Do you believe there is anybody in hell that could be in Heaven if they had so elected?" "Yes, sir," was my reply. "Then why do you say that you are an electionist?" "Because I think the Bible teaches it. I think it teaches distinctly an election of the nation, and it teaches an election of individuals to service; but I find nowhere that the Bible teaches the election of individuals to salvation." I believe there is a salvation prepared through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus for every man in every land, for every soul that ever

breathed, and that ever will breathe the breath of life; but because there is a salvation prepared is no argument that every individual will be saved. Far from it. It is simply a universal provision, which must be accepted by the individual if ever he is saved.

When my father was a young man there was a proclamation made throughout the country by the United States Government for everybody that would accept it, that the Government would give a certain amount of land in a certain section out West to all who would go and settle upon it. My father and two other young men decided to accept this offer. The papers were all

drawn up. Those two young men remained firm; my father got timorous and unbelieving and distrustful and would not go; he stayed at home; they went and each settled upon his little piece of land. One of them discovered a silver mine, the other discovered a copper mine. Those two young men from the backwoods of North Carolina have long since become rich: they went; they accepted; they became independently rich; my father rejected and became dependently poor. That is an illustration of the difference between the saved and the unsaved in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus. The man who accepts it is saved; the man who rejects it is lost.

But we are concerned also about

the nation Israel which is hidden away. They will have a chance to again come into play. The harvest time for Israel is when the King comes. When He comes Israel is coming out from the long hiding and is going to again be the greatest people on earth. Israel as a nation will be saved, but not until He comes Who is King.

"God sitteth King for ever
The waterfloods above,
And He who reigns in judgment
Doth also reign in love.
All powers His sceptre ruleth,
All hosts His will obey;
His throne is in the heavens,
And earth lies 'neath His sway.

Now deep distress of nations,
Hearts failing them for fear ;
Darkness and desolation
Brood o'er men far and near.
But soon God's new creation,
From chaos of the night,
To wondrous morn shall waken,
And there shall yet be light.

We see thee now, Lord Jesus,
With praise and glory crowned ;
All things not yet put under,
Until the trumpet sound.
But conquering and to conquer,
Thou dost ride forth to win
The last fight of the ages,
The victory over sin.

O rest! amidst upheaving
And triumphs of the wrong,
Amidst earth's sighs and grieving,
And bitter cry, How long?
O joy! beyond the sorrow,
O peace! above the pain;
Glad hope of bright to-morrow—
Lord Jesus, Thou shalt reign."

VIII

THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man that is a merchant seeking goodly pearls: and having found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it.—MATT. xiii. 45, 46.

VIII

THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

THE parable of the hidden treasure which we last considered and the parable of the pearl of great price are very similar in some respects. By many expositors they are regarded as teaching the same lesson. There is great similarity in the popular interpretation that is given to both of them. In the case of the parable of the hidden treasure the popular interpretation is that the hidden treasure represents salvation, and the man seeking it and finding it and selling his possessions to obtain it is the sinner seeking Christ

and finding Him. In the parable of the pearl of great price the popular interpretation is the same. The pearl of great price, according to popular interpretation, is salvation. The man who finds it and sells all his possessions is the sinner seeking salvation in Christ and finding it. But just as we saw that this popular interpretation of the parable of the hidden treasure is contrary to all the redemptive scheme of the New Testament, so we find with reference to this parable. The popular interpretation is contrary to the great scheme of redemption that we find outlined for us in the New Testament Scriptures. It is contrary, in the first place, in that it represents the sinner as the seeking one, when it is a fact

that Jesus seeks the sinner long before the sinner seeks Jesus. If that were not true there would never be a soul saved on this earth. Jesus came seeking to save that which was lost. He came primarily for that purpose, that He might save men from their sins, and the Holy Spirit, as the representative of the seeking Christ, has first to make His impression upon the human heart before there is any upturned look on the part of the sinner.

It is contrary also to the redemptive scheme, in that it represents salvation as a thing to be purchased by the sinner. If the pearl of great price is salvation, and if the man seeking it and finding it and selling all that he has and buying it represents the sinner in his

effort to be saved, such a salvation would be of works and not of grace.

Now, what is the lesson of this parable? Brushing aside everybody's interpretation and coming to view it in the light of the scheme of redemption, what does this pearl of great price represent? As I see it, it can represent but one thing, and that is the church of Jesus Christ on earth. When I say the church I do not mean at all to be understood as referring to any denomination. I do not refer to the Baptists or the Methodists or the Presbyterians or the Roman Catholics or any of these organizations within the one great church of Jesus Christ. I refer to the church as we find it repre-

sented in men and women who believe on Jesus and are saved—to the great world of redeemed men and women. There are two views of the church in the Scriptures. When the church is mentioned, it either refers to the church-general, as I have just indicated, the church made up of redeemed souls through the shed blood of Jesus Christ world-wide, or else it is the organized local body. In the sense that the pearl of great price represents the church it is the universal church, the church spiritual, the church of the redeemed, the holy Catholic church.

You will remember in connection with the parable of the hidden treasure that we held that the hidden treasure represented the Jews, and the One who

found the treasure was Jesus Himself. When He found the hidden treasure He hid it away. He gave Himself a ransom for the purchase of that field—that field of humanity in which Israel was hidden, so that Israel was bought by Jesus through His death on the Cross; He purchased the great world-field of humanity which incorporated within its scope the Jew.

Up to the present day there has not been a single reference in all these parables of the Kingdom to the church. We saw at the outset that the Kingdom was not synonymous with the church as some think; nor the church the Kingdom; that the Kingdom in its completion is this world of men and women with Jesus Christ as King. The

present administration of the Spirit is to gather out from among the men and women of the world material with which and through which our coming King is to govern His holy Kingdom when He returns to this earth. Here our Lord is giving us some little glimpse of the church taking its part in the great scheme of gathering out those that He would have saved, that He might prepare them for their respective places in the great world-kingdom over which He is personally to preside when He returns the second time.

I want us to see how happily, how beautifully the pearl of great price represents the church of Jesus Christ. In the first place, there is the character of its composition. The pearl is not

so precious now as in those olden times. At that time it was regarded as an exclusive jewel, being worn only by the members of the royal family; no one else was allowed to adorn himself with a pearl. It was regarded for various reasons as perhaps the most exclusive and most precious of jewels. The pearl is unlike every other gem. If you will study the chemistry of jewels you will find that the pearl stands out as the one unique gem of them all. Every other jewel is an inorganic compound. The diamond, emerald, topaz, and all other precious stones are inorganic. No life has been involved in the formation of these jewels. Chemists tell us that the pearl is composed simply of carbonate of lime. In its chemical

analysis it is exactly like that of common chalk with which we write upon the blackboard. It simulates the chalk like the graphite of the pencil does the diamond. That piece of graphite is identical in every whit in its chemical composition, in the elements that go to make it up, with the diamond. The same thing is true of the pearl and chalk. They are both composed of carbonate of lime, and yet nobody is able to understand how it is that one is practically worthless and the other is so valuable; but it is nevertheless true. It is true also that in the formation of this jewel there is involved life. So in this particular the pearl of great price represents the church of Jesus.

The church is not made up of a stated

lot of creeds and forms and documents. That is not the church, nor is it to be considered as the place where we worship. The house in which we worship is in no sense to be considered the church of Jesus Christ. It is simply a place set apart for the church to assemble and carry on its work for God. None of these things make up the church. The church as represented by the pearl of great price is the great body of redeemed men and women for whose salvation there has been poured out the sacrifice of life of the Son of God.

Have you ever studied the formation of pearls? They come mostly from the oyster and the clam, and sometimes from the common mussels that we find

in the creeks and the small streams. What is the explanation of the beautiful pearl found in the oyster shell? Scientists tell us that the pearl is the result of continued suffering and agony on the part of the little creature that lives within that shell. It was once thought that the presence of the pearl in the oyster indicated health and vigour, but long since science has demonstrated that this is not true, that the pearl in the oyster indicates the reverse; it indicates constant suffering and agony. The pearl has its beginning in an irritation which is usually produced by the admission, through some crack or crevice that is made in the shell, of some foreign substance, most generally a tiny bit of sand. This foreign substance

sets up an irritation; the irritation causes the oyster to bleed. This life-supporting fluid is drawn out bit by bit, layer by layer it hardens, the little creature giving its life-blood for the formation of his pearl. The brilliancy of every pearl has its beginning in the constant suffering of the little creature by whom it is formed. How beautifully this represents the church of Jesus Christ! Do you want a fit picture of the way the church is formed? Read the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah: "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him." Oh, when I begin to think of the suffering that was necessary for the formation of the church, I feel that I

am totally unfit and unable and unworthy to attempt to expound the truth. Oh, the suffering! Yonder upon Calvary Jesus our Lord, innocent, is suffering for our redemption; and the foreign substance that is causing His suffering is nothing more nor less than the sin of the world; foreign to Him, for He knew no sin. He had no sin, and yet sin—your sin and my sin—is laid upon Him; and around it and over it He poured the blood of His life in great soul-agony, that He might polish and perfect the church, His pearl of great price. No wonder Jesus is so careful of His church. We all love that which costs us most. We are all inclined to stand by that which we suffer for most. We are all ready to

fight for the things dearest to our heart. A man will fight for his country, for his home, because it lies nearest and dearest to his heart.

It is so with the church. When Jesus came to the hidden treasure, His own precious treasure Israel, and was rejected, He hid it away during the period of the Gentiles; the period of the church; then He set out to seek His people, another people. At last the Church, the pearl of great price, was formed; His pearl of great price, over which He suffered, for which He poured out His heart's blood. No wonder He is proud of it and watches it! A pearl that has cost the Son of God such suffering and agony of soul and body will not come to defeat. The day-dawn is com-

ing when this pearl is going to shine forth in all its beauty.

Again let me say that this pearl of great price represents the church in the use that is made of it. Of course the pearl with us is used simply for ornamentation, but it was not so in the days of our Lord. In those days the pearl was looked upon as a means of healing; it was supposed to have a charm for the healing of sorrow and bereavement; there was a kind of magic in it that was supposed to drive away the spirits of sorrow and gloom; and so it came to be looked upon as an emblem of peace or joy. When there was seen a pearl it was regarded as a sign that sorrow and gloom had been dispelled. It was

frequently used after war and great periods of conflict and struggle between different nations and individuals, when the smoke of battle had passed away. How fitly this represents the church of Jesus. Oh, what has it meant to the world as a healing for its sorrows, its suffering, its misery, and disappointment! Have you ever stopped to think what our city would be if there were no churches here? It you were suddenly placed where there is no church in some country where there is not a redeemed soul, every man and woman and child looking into the face of a heathen god, you can get some estimate of what the church is worth to the world as a balm for its troubles and trials.

I once attended the funeral of a little

child, where neither father nor mother was a member of the church. And who were gathered around that little coffin in which the child lay? The men of the world? No. The men of great influence? No. The mighty men of business? No. The women in society? No. There were gathered around that little coffin to comfort and solace the suffering and the sorrow that had come to that home a band of church folks, men and women who had left their work and had come to spend this hour comforting the bereaved; and when I began to look into this parable, that scene came up before me afresh: there was the pearl of great price dispelling the gloom, driving away the sorrow, trying to bring hope and life.

That is the work of the church. That is the mission of the pearl of great price.

Lastly, I want to say a word about the fitness of this illustration in that the pearl has to be polished. It is of little value when it is first taken out of its home. It has to go carefully through the hand of the polisher; here and there it has to be touched before it reaches its fullest value. So with the church of Jesus Christ. It has to be carried through its period of polishing. The church is the pearl of great price, which price is the life of the Son of God. On the cross He poured forth His blood that He might redeem us and make us worthy of our place in His Kingdom; but the church,

like the pearl, is to pass through the hand of the polisher. Sometimes the polishing seems a heavy struggle. Sometimes the hand and the instrument of the polisher seems rough. We never understand why we have to go through these things, but as loyal subjects of the Kingdom of Christ and members of the church-universal, we have to stand by and submit willingly and loyally and lovingly to the work of the polisher, knowing that the day will come when we shall understand the mystery. That day is coming. After a while Jesus is coming back for His pearl of great price; that which He purchased with His life; that for which He poured forth His sacrificial blood. No wonder He is coming back to it. When the trumpet

of God is sounded yonder in the skies, the church of Jesus will come forth, and those that live yet upon the earth will be changed and made fit for His presence; then together with the risen rejoicing dead and the changed righteous living, making up the one great universal church, with one Lord, one faith, and one baptism, we shall march through the skies beyond the noise and the turmoil and the strife and the suffering that goes on down here in the period of the great tribulation.

IX

THE DRAGNET

Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind : which, when it was filled, they drew up on the beach ; and they sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but the bad they cast away. So shall it be in the end of the world : the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the righteous, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire : there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth.—MATT. xiii. 47–50.

IX

THE DRAGNET

THIS parable is similar to all the rest of the parables of the Kingdom in that it presents four points of special interest. You remember in these parables we have found that each one presents four separate and distinct points of interest. So here we have the net, the sea, the fish, and the fishermen. Now, it is also similar to the other parables in that it has two interpretations. There is what we have seen fit to call the popular interpretation, and there is the interpretation which is not so generally accepted. The popu-

lar interpretation is that held by those who believe that, in all the parables, the Kingdom represents the church. The net is considered to represent the church, and the sea the world; the fish the souls gathered out of the world by the church; and the fishermen represent the workers in the church—the ministers and the Sunday-school teachers and the office bearers, the deacons and the like. Those who give themselves to the work of the church of Jesus Christ are by this interpretation regarded as the fishermen gathering in the fish. It does seem to me that the Master's own application of this parable is sufficient to show to any reasonable mind that this interpretation is not the correct one; for clearly, in His

application of it, He sets forth that the fishermen gathering up the fish, managing the net, assorting the fish when they are caught, are the angels themselves, who are sent from God upon a definite mission of assorting and arranging the fish. If we look carefully at the teaching of all these parables up to the present we shall get very definitely and clearly what this one is set to teach; and it is one of the most interesting and certainly one of the most instructive of all that our Master gave.

Let us fix in our minds the points that each parable teaches.

The first represents the beginning of the Kingdom. The tares, the difficulties through which the Kingdom has to pass. The mustard seed, the

external development and growth of the Kingdom. The leaven, the internal or spiritual growth of the individual subjects of the Kingdom. The hidden treasure, the position of Israel, God's favoured and favourite people in the process and development of the Kingdom. The pearl of great price, the position of the Church in the process and development of the Kingdom. We come now to learn of another phase of the Kingdom's development. This parable of the dragnet, as I see it, is to set forth clearly the construction of the Kingdom about which our Lord has been speaking—the preliminary and initial arrangement.

You will remember that we have made the point during all this study that the

Kingdom of Heaven is at present only in the process of evolution—the process of growth and development. Our Lord Himself is the King, banished, as it were, from His domain; but He is at work through His representatives, and by His own Spirit gathering up the material by which and with which the Kingdom of Heaven is eventually to be fully established.

To use an illustration: The Pope of Rome regards himself as the King of Italy, though he has to recognize the fact that he is the banished king; he lives in seclusion, and his cardinals and priests, his representatives, are in all parts of the earth at work, planning and working; the Pope hopes to be reinstated as the real, acting, ruling

sovereign of all Italy and of all the powers. Our Lord is the banished King; but He is at His place at the right hand of God the Father, banished, not by reason of man's decree; the decrees of men are in accordance with the great plan and purpose of God, wrought out before the world was made. Jesus is at the right hand of God the Father to-day because He wills to be there; He is making intercession with God the Father for all His subjects, and for all lost men everywhere the world over. He, through His Holy Spirit, is now gathering up the material with which the Kingdom is eventually to be completed. Some day He is to return. He is to return just when every subject has been secured and prepared for

the Kingdom. Then it is that He will come and take His position among men on this earth and rule in the affairs of men. This is the purpose, therefore, of this parable; it is to give us a glimpse of the Kingdom's struggles and its final culmination. If we take a concordance and look through the teaching of the Scriptures in the Old Testament prophecies and the New, we shall see that this teaching, as given in this parable, is clearly the programme of Jesus. I ask you to note the fact that the Old Testament prophecies are just as clear in their prophecies concerning the second coming of Jesus and the establishment of his earthly Kingdom as they are about His first advent; and when we look into the New Testament Scrip-

tures, where Jesus Himself speaks, and where His apostles and disciples are speaking for Him, we have the truth more clearly set forth.

Let us for a moment go back and take our stand upon Olivet; beautiful, holy, God-crowned Olivet, where Jesus the last time looked into the faces of His disciples, and where for the last time the eye of man looked into the eye of God; there standing upon that holy summit, surrounded by His circle of disciples, in conversation with them about some of the deep and weighty things of the Kingdom, and giving them some directions as to their part in its establishment, how that they were to go into all parts of the world, preaching

the gospel to every creature. As they hung with breathless silence upon the Master's last words, that peculiar, indescribable, inexplicable miracle took place—the Ascension. Jesus began, without a single premonitory expression leading them to expect such a thing, to ascend out of their midst. He went up higher and higher until He was out of sight. The disciples were so awed that not a word was spoken. I think that they felt very much as I should feel to-day, if suddenly our Lord should appear in our midst. I feel quite sure there would not be one of us that could speak. There would be such an overmastering awe that no one could utter a syllable. So I am not surprised that there is not a word recorded that these

disciples spoke. They could simply stand and gaze and look as the Master went through the trackless space into the beyond. Just then an angel appeared from heaven with the very first message that He sent after His ascension, and that was a promise of His return. These are the words of the angel who bore the message, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which was taken from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." The very first word that was spoken after Jesus had returned to His Father—the first word even before time had elapsed for His great reception in heaven by the redeemed spirits and angels—the first thing that Jesus did

was to speed back to the earth, for the encouragement of His waiting disciples, a hope of His second coming.

From that time, all through the New Testament period, the church moved with an upturned look; they were not looking at the open grave, but they were looking for the coming of the Lord; and from that time until the present there have been many who have been constantly moving with the eye of expectancy. I am one of them. So far as I can see, from the study of the prophets and in gathering up the opinions of men who know far more than I know, it is difficult to understand why the Lord Himself is tarrying to-day. I cannot see but that we are now living in the evening time of this dispensation,

and I should not be surprised if that beautiful model prayer that He gave us, "Thy Kingdom come," were about to be answered.

There are five things that the Apostle Paul tells us, in 1 Thessalonians iv., will occur before our Lord comes to the earth to take the reins of government in His hands. There will be first the blast of the trumpet; then the voice of the Archangel. Third, the resurrection of the righteous dead. Fourth, the change of the righteous living. Fifth, the ascension of those who are prepared to meet the Lord in the air. We are here to-day; things are moving as they usually move, and nothing strange is occurring: there is nothing so far as we can see that would

cause us to expect any great change to take place in the affairs of men; and yet, in my judgment, the Lord is almost prepared for the blowing of the trumpet, the shout of the Archangel, the opening of the graves and the resurrection of the righteous dead, and the changing of the righteous living, for the ascension of those who are to meet the Lord in the air. I cannot say that this is the time; I cannot say that it is not. I can only quote the words of our Lord and say, "Watch, therefore, for you know not the day nor the hour wherein our Lord doth come." But that is not the only thing that is to take place before our Lord returns to the earth. We are told that the devil is to be chained. The world is now under

the administration of the devil. We talk about God's reigning on the earth; God does not reign anywhere on this earth except in the hearts of His subjects. I do not know a piece of ground on which God's perfect will is absolutely carried out. I do not know a single section of the world where the will of God is done as perfectly and absolutely as it is done to-day in heaven. It is true we are holding the devil in check to some extent; but it is his day and will continue to be until our Lord Himself comes.

I received a letter recently seeking to get me to a town for an evangelistic campaign, and one thing the writer said was this: "Come and let's run

the devil out of town." I wrote back and said, " You do not know the devil as well as I do ; if you did you would not be talking about running him out of town." He did not know the devil in the Scriptures or he would never expect to run him out of town. The devil isn't in the running business. If anybody is on the run it is the church. You can say many things about the devil—abuse him ; you can't abuse him too much—but you can't say that he is a coward. There is nothing that he will not risk that he may damn a soul. He is in charge of the affairs of this world and he will continue to be until at last the Avenger shall come from the throne of God for his arrest. Then will be the period of his banish-

ment; but all the churches of Christendom might band together to-day to put him out of this world and he could not be put out. We might hold him in check in his efforts to damn the race; but to get rid of him in his efforts to damn the race, such a thing cannot be done until it is done by the decree of God.

Here we are in this period of satanic domination. The church is working and the Kingdom is being established; souls are being prepared for the final consummation—for the period of construction. After a while the trumpet of God shall be heard and the voice of the Archangel; the dead in Christ will be raised, the living in Christ will be changed; then the holy angels, the

fishermen of this parable, will come, and their mission to this earth will be that of assortment: those that are prepared will be gathered; those that are not prepared will be hurled into the furnace of fire. The furnace of fire in this instance represents that great and awful persecution through which those that are left upon the earth will have to pass when the church of God, the bride of Jesus, is caught up to meet Him in the air. Somebody says, "What is to become of the unrighteous dead? If the righteous dead are to be raised at the sound of the trumpet and the voice of the Archangel, what is to become of the unrighteous dead?" John, in his Apocalyptic vision, gives an answer to that

question. He says that "the rest of the dead lived not upon the earth until the thousand years are past"; then they will come forth and together with all the world will stand at the Great White Throne and be judged according to the deeds done in the body.

What is to become of the unrighteous living left on the earth when Jesus sends His angels to bring the church, the redeemed of the world, to Himself in the air? They will pass through that awful persecution, that period of tribulation described by our Lord in Matthew xxiv., and so vigorously and so terribly depicted in the vision of the prophet Daniel. This will be their time of persecution and tribulation. It is that period when brother shall be arrayed

against brother; son against mother; mother against son; the world of humanity left without a constraining influence! The church gone, every good man and good woman gone to be with the Lord; the Holy Spirit's administration is at an end, and nothing but the devil incarnate in the Antichrist in charge of the affairs of this world.

At present the Antichrist is at work; he has been at work all the time, but we are told in the Scriptures that the Antichrist is hindered by the Spirit; by the church; by the redeemed of God. But there will be no Spirit here then; the Holy Spirit's administration will be at an end and the Antichrist will be let loose; he will be the vicegerent of Satan, and all the misery that

the devil can heap upon human beings will be heaped upon the inhabitants of the earth of that time.

But is that all? We have left the Lord in the air, where the bride has gone to meet Him; where the marriage supper of the Lamb is to be celebrated; but that is not all. The Kingdom is not yet formed. When we go up to meet the Lord in the air, we go there for the purpose of appointment. Each man will be appointed to his station, his position, his place in the earthly ministration of Jesus. I will have my place. I do not know what it will be, whether a place conspicuous or humble, but I will have my place in that period. You will have yours. Every redeemed

soul will have its place. Jesus will use this occasion for the organization and the construction of His subjects that are to form the basis of His earthly administration, and when our places are assigned, and we are fitted into them, a commission will be given to the angel to come and arrest the devil and take him out of the earth, to lock him in the pit for a period of a thousand years; and then will come the King and His subjects that have been redeemed and assigned to their places, back to this earth; back to the place where He was crucified; back to the place where we ourselves as His subjects have been vilified and slandered; back to the scene of our struggle. Can you imagine a greater privilege, after those years of

absence from this earth and presence with the Lord, to come again with Him to the place of our childhood! Back here to reign, back here to rule; back here to help Jesus as He administers the affairs of this world, national, municipal, local, and world-wide; as He, the ruling Sovereign, once crucified and driven from His place among men! This Christ administering the reins of universal, world-wide government through us as His subjects, redeemed and trained and fitted for our place in the Master's government. Oh, the question that beats and throbs in my heart is, If Jesus should come to-day, are we ready? Would we get a place as high as we should like? Could we stand such an examination for usefulness as

we should like? What would be His assignment of me? What would be His assignment of you?

"High raise your heads, ye lofty gates,
For see, the King of Glory waits;
Ye everlasting doors arise,
And make a passage as he flies.

But hark! the heavenly hosts inquire,
'Who is this mighty, conquering King?'
In cheerful strains the answering choir
Lift high their voice, and sweetly sing:

'He is the Lord of boundless might,
High raise your heads, ye gates of light;
He conquered death, and hell, and sin;
Lift up, ye doors, He shall come in.'

But hark! again the angels say,
'Who is this mighty, conquering King?
Who rises to the realms of day;
Whose praise with such applause ye
sing?'

'The Lord, of boundless power pos-
sessed;
God over all, for ever blessed:
The Lord of hosts, the most renowned,
The King of endless glory crowned.'"

X

THE HOUSEHOLDER

And He said unto them, Therefore every scribe who hath been made a disciple to the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.—MATT. xiii. 52.

X

THE HOUSEHOLDER

AFTER all that has been said, the great inspiration of these parables is the coming of the King when the Kingdom is ready. At present He is preparing for this blessed event, and all along we see His coming outlined. And the parable of the householder, which follows the dragnet, clearly sets forth our duty to be on the watch, doing what we can to hasten His coming, and gives us a hint at the government of the Kingdom.

I shall not attempt to do more than call attention to the outline teaching of the parable. It sets forth the govern-

ment of the Kingdom when finished, which is by the King through the scribes or specially prepared subjects. This will be millennium.

There is no more glorious truth to a genuine child of God than this. I shall never forget when my own heart was first fired with it. It was the last time I ever heard D. L. Moody, at Northfield. For fully an hour he preached on "The Coming of the Lord," and I do not know that I was ever so much moved before. He closed with a poem with which I close this little book, praying that God may bless it to others as He blessed it to me that day.

"'It may be in the evening,
When the work of the day in done,

And you have time to sit in the twilight
And watch the sinking sun,
While the long bright day lies slowly
Over the sea,
And the hour grows quiet and holy
With thoughts of Me;
While you hear the village children
Passing along the street,
Among those thronging footsteps
May come the sound of My feet.
Therefore, I tell you, Watch,
By the light of the evening star,
When the room is growing dusky
As the clouds afar;
Let the door be on the latch
In your home,
For it may be through the gloaming
I will come.

It may be when the midnight
Is heavy upon the land,
And the black waves lying rumbly
Along the sand;
When the moonless night draws close,
And the lights are out in the house;
When the fire burns low and red,
And the watch is ticking loudly
Beside the bed.

Though you sleep, tired out, on your couch,
Still your heart must wake and watch
In the dark room,
For it may be that at midnight
I will come.

It may be at the cock-crow,
When the night is dying slowly
In the sky,

And the sea looks calm and holy,
Waiting for the dawn
Of the golden sun,
Which draweth nigh;
When the mists are on the valleys, shading
The rivers chill,
And My morning star is fading, fading
Over the hill:
Behold, I say unto you, Watch;
Let the door be on the latch
In your home;
In the chill before the dawning,
Between the night and morning
I may come.

It may be in the morning,
When the sun is bright and strong,
And the dew is glittering sharply
Over the little lawn;

When the waves are laughing loudly
Along the shore,
And the little birds are singing sweetly
About the door;
With the long day's work before you,
You rise up with the sun,
And the neighbours come in to talk a little
Of all that must be done;
But remember that I may be the next
To come in at the door,
To call you from your busy work
For ever more.
As you work your heart must watch,
For the door is on the latch
In your room,
And it may be in the morning
I will come.'

So He passed down my cottage garden,
By the path that leads to the sea,
Till He came to the turn of the little road
Where the birch and the laburnum tree
Lean over and arch the way ;
There I saw Him a moment stay,
And turn once more to me,
As I wept at the cottage door,
And lift up His hands in blessing—
Then I saw His face no more.

And I stood still in the doorway,
Leaning against the wall,
Not heeding the fair white roses,
Though I crushed them and let them fall ;

Only looking down the pathway,
And looking towards the sea,
And wondering, and wondering
When He would come back for me,
Till I was aware of an angel
Who was going swiftly by,
With the gladness of one who goeth
In the light of God most high.

He passed the end of the cottage
Toward the garden gate,—
(I suppose he was come down
At the setting of the sun
To comfort some one in the village
Whose dwelling was desolate),
And he paused before the door
Beside my place,
And the likeness of a smile
Was on his face—

'Weep not,' he said, 'for unto you is
given
To watch for the coming of His feet
Who is the Glory of our blessed heaven.
The work and watching will be very
sweet.
Even in an earthly home,
And in such an hour as you think not,
He will come.'

So I am watching quietly
Every day.
Whenever the sun shines brightly,
I rise and say,
'Surely it is the shining of His face,'
And look up into the gates of His high
place
Beyond the sea,

For I know He is coming shortly
To summon me.
And when a shadow falls across the window
Of my room,
Where I am working my appointed task,
I lift my head to watch the door, and ask
If He is come;
And the angel answers sweetly
In my home,
'Only a few more shadows
And He will come.'"

Printed by Hazell, Watson & Viney, Ld., London and Aylesbury.